

## Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5420

INFO AMEMBASSH LONDON

AMCONSUL BELFAST

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FOLLOWING TRANSMITTED BY CONSULATE GENERAL BELFAST:

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, U.K. (N.I.)

SUBJECT: GENERAL ELECTION PROSPECTS IN N.I.

SUMMARY: RESULTS OF GENERAL ELECTION IN NI HARD TO PREDICT BECAUSE OF  
IRRELEVANCE OF 1970 RESULTS AND UNCERTAINTIES ABOUT SWINGS OF

OPINION SINCE JUNE 1973 ASSEMBLY ELECTION. THERE ARE ESSENTIALLY  
TWO ELECTION CAMPAIGNS BEING FOUGHT, ONE IN EACH POLITICAL TRAD-  
ITION. MAIN PROTESTANT ISSUE IS HOW BEST TO PRESERVE UNION --  
THROUGH AGREEMENT WITH DUBLIN AND COMPLIANCE WITH HMG'S WISHES OR  
IN DEFIANCE OF BOTH; IT IS THOUGHT THAT LOYALISTS HAVE GAINED  
AGAINST FAULKNER SINCE 1973. AMONG CATHOLICS, SDLP'S CLAIM OF  
PROGRESS THROUGH PARTNERSHIP IS COUNTERED BY REPUBLICAN CHARGES OF  
SELLOUT ON INTERNMENT ISSUE, AND SDLP'S OPPONENTS ARE WELL-  
PLACED TO CUT INTO SDLP'S OVERWHELMING 1973 SWEEP OF CATHOLIC  
VOTES AND SEATS. THERE WILL BE SMALL NON-SECTARIAN VOTE WHICH  
MAY BE

SIGNIFICANT IN SOME CLOSE-RUN CONSTITUENCIES. DUBLIN  
GOVERNMENT CAN DO LITTLE TO INFLUENCE OUTCOME NOW, AND HAS GENER-  
ALLY LET PRO-EXECUTIVE PAROEES DOWN IN RECENT WEEKS. HMG'S

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ASSURANCETO IMPROVE SECURITY SITUATION OR RELEASE MORE DETAINEES  
SINCE EXECUTIVE TOOK OFFICE MAY WORK AGAINST LATTER. ON OTHER HAND,

CONTINUED EXISTENCE OF POWER-SHARING EXECUTIVE IS PROBABLY A PLUS FOR ITS PROPONENTS. IN SIX MOST POLARIZED CONSTITUENCIES VOTERS MAY WELL CLUSTER BEHIND CO-RELIGIONIST THOUGHT TO HAVE BUT CHANGES AND/OR REJECT PERCEIVED INTERLOPING VBRE-SPLITTER. THERE IS EVEN LESS RELATION

SHIP THAN USUAL BETWEEN ISSUES AND PARTIES IN NI AND THOSE IN GREAT BRITAIN. IF ELECTION HERE IS REFERENDUM ON SUNNINGDALE, RESULTS MAY WELL PROVIDE SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE (MAJORITY OF ANTI-SUNNINGDALE SEATS BUT PRO-SUNNINGDALE TOTAL VOTES, DEFEAT OF SOME MAJOR FIGURES IN EACH CAMP) AND SETTLE NOTHING. END SUMMARY.

1. RESULTS OF BRITISH GENERAL ELECTION IN NORTHERN IRELAND ARE HARD TO PREDICT. 1970 ELECTION OFFERS LITTLE GUIDANCE BECAUSE THERE WAS GENERALLY STRAIGHT SECTARIAN VOTE IN CONSTITUENCIES WHERE SECTS ROUGHLY EVENLY BALANCED, AND INTERNECINE STRUGGLES BETWEEN VARIOUS TYPES OF (LOWER-CASE) UNIONISTS IN CONSTITUENCIES WHERE NUMBER OF PROTESTANTS WAS OVERWHELMING. SINCE 1970 WE HAVE HAD NOT ONLY REAPPORTIONMENT OF CONSTITUENCIES WHICH IS CONFOUNDING PREDICTORS IN GREAT BRITAIN, BUT ALSO SPLIT IN BOTH POLITICAL TRADITIONS IN NORTHERN IRELAND. 1973 ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, FOUGHT BY PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION ON NEW WESTMINSTER CONSTITUENCY BOUNDARIES, DO OFFER MORE RELEVANT PERSPECTIVE FOR ANALYSTS, BUT THERE HAVE BEEN NO PUBLIC OPINION POLLS IN NORTHERN IRELAND SINCE THEN TO DETERMINE WHETHER THERE HAS BEEN ANY SWING FOR OR AGAINST COALITION EXECUTIVE PARTIES.

2. AMONG PROTESTANTS, BASIC ISSUE IS HOW BEST TO PRESERVE UNION WITH GREAT BRITAIN WITHIN UK. UNITED ULSTER UNIONISTS ATTACK PRO-ASSEMBLY (FAULKNERITE) UNIONISTS FOR HAVING OPENED WAY TO UNITED IRELAND BY AGREEING AT SUNNINGDALE TO COUNCIL OF IRELAND. FAULKNERITES TRY TO PROTECT SELVES ON THIS ISSUE BY EMPHASIZING THEY WON'T SET UP COUNCIL UNLESS DUBLIN ACTS EFFECTIVELY ON CONTROLLING CROSS-BORDER TERRORISM, BRINGING FUGITIVE OFFENDERS TO JUSTICE, AND RECOGNIZING CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS OF NORTHERN IRELAND. THEY COUNTERATTACK UNITED UNIONISTS FOR BEING ILL-MANNERED LOOTS AND WRECKERS, BENT ON COLLISION COURSE WITH WESTMINSTER PARLIAMENT WHICH COULD LEAD TO BREAK IN UNION. IT IS GENERALLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THOUGHT THAT SOME PROTESTANT VOTERS HAVE SWUNG AWAY FROM FAULKNER TO UNITED UNIONISTS -- OR IN OTHER WORDS, THAT FAULKNER HAS NOT YET BROUGHT THESE WITH HIM TO ACCEPT SUNNINGDALE PACKAGE -- SINCE JUNE 1973, WHEN ANTI-CONSTITUTION UNIONISTS GOT ABOUT ONE-THIRD OF THE VALID VOTES CAST AND MAJORITY OF PROTESTANT VOTES. THIS ASSESSMENT IS SUBSTANTIATED BY EAGERNESS OF LOYALISTS TO HAVE ELECTION OR REFERENDUM ON SUNNINGDALE, FAULKNER'S JANUARY 4 DEFEAT IN ULSTER UNIONIST COUNCIL ON COUNCIL OF IRELAND, AND ADMISSION OF FAULKNER STAFFERS THAT UNIONIST FAITHFUL ARE RESIGNED TO POWER-SHARING EX-

EXECUTIVE BUT STILL BOGGLE AT COUNCIL OF IRELAND. ON  
OTHER HAND, LOYALISTS' FAILURE TO SPELL OUT CREDIBLE  
ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATIVES TO SUNNINGDALE PACKAGE OR TO PREVENT EX-  
ECUTIVE FROM COMING INTO POWER AND OPERATING IN ASSEMBLY, AND IN-  
TERNAL STRESSES WITHIN UNITED ULSTER UNIONIST COUNCIL, MAY HAVE  
LED TO DISILLUSIONMENT AND APATHY  
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5. THERE IS PROBABLY LITTLE DUBLIN GOVERNMENT CAN DO AT THIS LATE  
STAGE TO INFLUENCE ELECTION IN FAVOR OF EXECUTIVE PARTIES. PERFOR-  
MANCE IN PREVENTING CROSS-BORDER TERRORISM HAS LOOKED BAD IN  
RECENT WEEKS, PARTICULARLY IN LIFFORD-STRABANE AREA, WHERE PROVOS  
FIRED ACROSS BORDER AT UK SECURITY FORCES AND THEN HELD OFF UN-  
ARMED GARDAI LONG ENOUGH TO GET AWAY, AND IN SOUTH ARMAGH - MON-  
AGHAN AREA, WHERE BOOBY TRAPS DETONATED BY WOPES LEADING ACROSS  
BORDER ARE REPEATEDLY DISCOVERED. ON RECOGNITION ISSUE, NOTHING  
COSGRAVE CAN NOW SAY CONSISTENT WITH HIS CONSTITUTION WOULD  
SATISFY WORRIED UNIONISTS. LAW ENFORCEMENT ISSUE IS OF COURSE  
STILL UNDER STUDY BY ANGLO-IRISH COMMISSION.

6. SECURITY SITUATION, STILL HMG'S RESPONSIBILITY, MAY ON THE  
WHOLE HARM PROSPECTS OF PRO-EXECUTIVE PARTIES. IT HAS GOT WORSE  
SINCE EXECUTIVE TOOK OFFICE JANUARY 1 -- PROVISIONALS HAVE SEV-  
ERAL TIMES BOMBED DOWNTOWN BELFAST AND DEVASTATED A NUMBER OF  
COUNTRY TOWNS, WHILE ULSTER FREEDOM FIGHTERS HAVE BEEN SHOOTING  
CATHOLICS AND BOMBING THEIR PUBS. ON OTHER HAND, ALTHOUGH NORTHERN  
IRELAND SECRETARY OF STATE PYM HAS PROVIDED TO RELEASE DETAINEES  
AS POLITICAL AND SECURITY SITUATION IMPROVES, HE HAS NOT RELEASED  
ONE SINCE EXECUTIVE TOOK OFFICE.

7. EXISTENCE OF EXECUTIVE FOR PAST SEVEN WEEKS MAY HELP ITS

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PROPOSERS SOMEWHAT IN BOTH POLITICAL TRADITIONS. IT HAS PROVIDED  
DRAMATIC PROOF THAT COOPERATION IS POSSIBLE AMONG ULSTERMEN  
OF DIFFERENT TRADITIONS. SEVERAL SDLP MINISTERS HAVE PUT SELVES  
ACROSS TO PUBLIC AS EFFECTIVE WORKERS FOR BEST INTEREST OF ALL  
ULSTER, THUS REASSURING FRIGHTENED PROTESTANTS. VIRTUE OF DEVEL-  
VED GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN DEMONSTRATED IN PROVINCE'S EXEMPTION FROM  
GREAT BRITAIN'S THREE-DAY WEEK, FLOW OF ANNOUNCEMENTS ABOUT  
FUTURE NEW INDUSTRIES, CONTINUED IMPROVEMENT IN UNEMPLOYMENT  
STATISTICS, ETC. MANY CATHOLICS MAY WELL BE PLEASED WITH SDLP'S  
ROLE IN EXECUTIVE, BUT SOME WHO PROFESS NO OBJECTION IN PRIN-  
CIPLE TO POWER-SHARING OBJECT TO SDLP'S DOING SO WITH FAULKNER,  
IN COLLABORATION WITH BRITISH, AND AT EXPENSE OF WORKING CLASS  
AND DETAINEES AND THEIR FAMILIES. AND AS EXECUTIVE MEMBERS WOULD  
ADMIT, THEY HAVE NOT BEEN AROUND LONG ENOUGH ACTUALLY TO ACCOMPLISH  
MUCH OF THEIR AMBITIOUS SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROGRAM.

8. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE TWO DIFFERENT CAMPAIGNS, AS INDICATED ABOVE,  
FACT THAT THEY ARE BEING FOUGHT SIMULTANEOUSLY FOR SINGLE SEAT  
WILL HAVE PARTICULAR IMPACT IN SIX CONSTITUENCIES WHICH HAVE  
ROUGHLY EQUAL ADHERENTS OF LOYALIST/UNIONIST AND NATIONALIST/RE-  
PUBLICAN POLITICAL TRADITION. IN THESE, MOST VOTERS WILL BE CON-  
CERNED AT END OF DAY NOT TO SPLIT VOTE FOR CANDIDATES OF OWN  
TRADITION TO PERMIT VICTORY OF CANDIDATE OF OPPOSITE TRADITION,  
AND THUS THEY MAY TEND TO CLUSTER BEHIND CO-RELIGIONIST PERCEIVED  
AS HAVING BEST CHANCE, THOUGH THIS MAY BE MITIGATED BY RESENTMENT  
AGAINST PERCEIVED INTERLOPING SPLITTER.

9. BRITISH PARTY CONSENSUS ON NI POLICY AND ULSTER PREOCCUPATION  
WITH CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES HAVE FURTHER DIMINISHED BOTH NI VOTERS'  
INTEREST IN NATIONAL BRITISH ISSUES AND IDENTIFICATION OF LOCAL  
PARTIES WITH BRITISH COUNTERPARTS. ONLY NILP IS TRYING TO MAKE AN  
ISSUE OF COST OF LIVING. ONLY FOUR UNIONIST CANDIDATES -- ONE PRO-  
WEST AND THREE FAULKNERITE -- HAVE ENDORSEMENT OF CONSERVAT-  
IVE CENTRAL OFFICE. NILP HOPES FOR VICTORY OF BRITISH LABOUR,  
BUT HAS NO GOOD WORD FOR HAROLD WILSON AND PROMISES NOT TO ACCEPT  
WHIP ON ULSTER MATTERS. LIBERAL TRADITION HAS BEEN ABSORBED INTO  
ALLIANCE, WHICH SUPPORTS EEC AND WORKER PARTICIPATION, BUT WOULD  
NOT ACCEPT ANY PARTY WHIP. SDLP LEADER GERRY FITT SAYS HE FAVORS  
BRITISH LABOUR VICTORY, BUT HIS COLLEAGUE PADDY DEVLIN TOLD US  
PRIVATELY THAT, SOCIAL DEMOCRACY ASIDE, HEATH'S DECISIVENESS AND  
FORTHRIGHTNESS IS BETTER FOR IRELAND THAN EVASIONS AND DECEPTIONS

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OF HAROLD WILSON.

10. ON THE WHOLE MOST POLITICIANS HERE HAVE TACITLY ACCEPTED LOY-

ALISTS' DEFINITION OF THIS ELECTION IN NI AS REFERENDUM ON SUNN-  
INGDALE. IN ASSESSING RESULTS IN THESE TERMS, OBSERVERS AND PART-  
ISANS WILL BE LOOKING AT NUMBER OF SEATS WON (BOOKMAKERS GIVE  
LOYALISTS SIX OR SEVEN, PRO-ASSEMBLY UNIONISTS THREE, SDLP TWO,  
AND ANTI-EXECUTIVE REPUBLICAN MAYBE ONE), TOTAL VOTES CAST FOR OR  
AGAINST PRO-SUNNINGDALE CANDIDATES (LATTER MAY GET BARE MAJORITY  
WHICH WOULD BE BIG GAIN FOR OPPONENTS SINCE JUNE 1973). CONSIDER-  
ABLE POLITICAL CAPITAL WOULD BE MADE OF DEFEAT OF ANY OF ADMIN-  
ISTRATION MEMBERS (FITT, BRADFORD AND IVAN COOPER) OR UUUC  
LEADERS (PAISLEY, CRAIG OR WEST). BEST GUESS IS THAT BARRING  
UNFORESEEN LANDSLIDE, THERE WILL BE SOMETHING IN RESULTS FOR BOTH  
SIDES, AND THEY WILL SETTLE NOTHING.  
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## Message Attributes

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**TAGS:** PINT, UK  
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